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Uffizi Gallery, Florence

ANGEL WITH MANDOLIN. BY GIOVANNI BATTISTA DEI ROSSI (IL ROSSO)

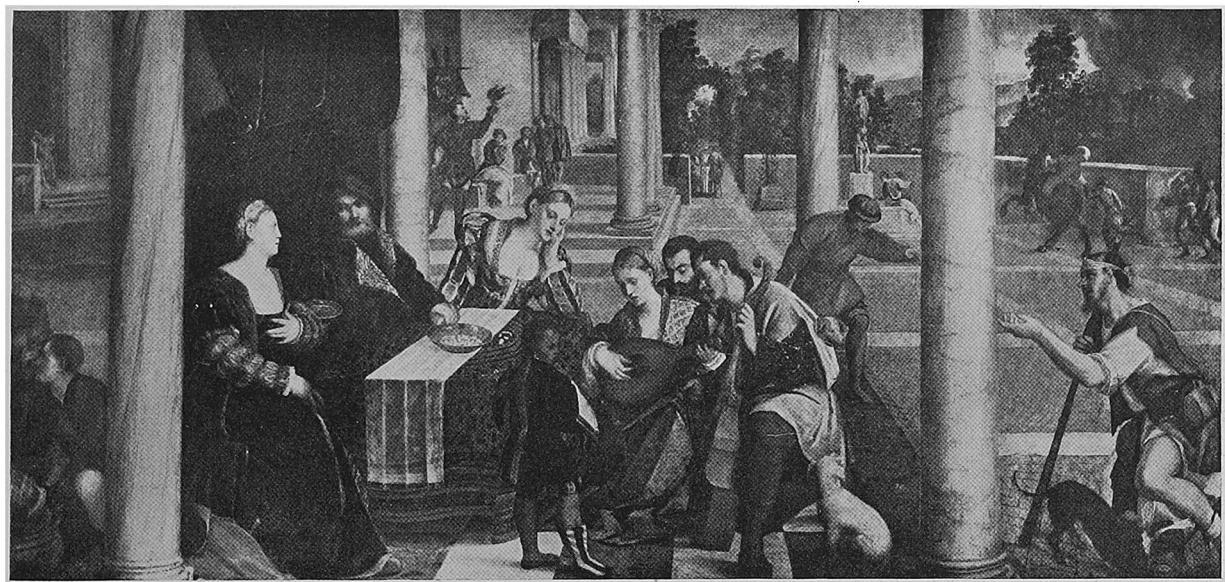
On Listening to Music

BY ALFRED J. LOTKA, M.A., D.Sc.

HERE is confusion of counsels: "If you love music, hear it; go to operas, concerts, and pay fiddlers to play to you; but I insist upon your neither piping nor fiddling for yourself. It puts a gentleman in a very frivolous and contemptible light; brings him into a great deal of bad company; and takes up a great deal of time which might be better employed." So wrote Chesterfield. Be a listener, but not a performer.

Now for more modern authority, William James: "The habit of excessive indulgence in music, for those who are neither performers themselves, nor musically gifted enough to take it in a purely intellectual way, has probably a relaxing effect upon character." In other words: you may play, but you may not listen unless you can play.

Here is what Addison says: "Music is the only sensual gratification which mankind may indulge in to excess with-



DIVES AND LAZARUS. BY BONIFAZIO VERONESE

Academy, Venice

out injury to their moral or religious feelings." That is to say, listen to your heart's content, a permit without qualification. While we are wavering, there comes to mind a word of Richter's: "Music, if only listened to, and not scientifically cultivated, gives too much play to the feelings and fancy; the difficulties of the art draw forth the whole energies of the soul."

Yes, perhaps, in the performer. In the listener it has been observed that the difficulties of the art have at times drawn forth quite different sentiments—the desire that the art were not only difficult but impossible.

Where authorities disagree so radically, lesser lights have the privilege of using their own discretion. And this discretion seems to point, as we reflect upon the varied noises we have heard proceeding from drawing-room pianos, from sundry instruments, and even from nature's own musical marvel, the human throat, that patient listening, so far from being a crime, may at times be a virtue of no mean order; that the criminal is more apt to be the performer. At the least, the listener is a comparatively inoffensive sort of sinner. The bad performer, on the other hand, is an aggressive enemy of society.

It must be remembered that the highest type of talent for execution in music calls for a two-fold native equipment: A certain mental and emotional constitution, but also some very definite physical qualifications, such as a flexible, hand, a supple wrist—or, in the singer, a fine adjustment of the vocal apparatus. If a person should lack the native or acquired physical requirements but possess in high degree the mental qualifications, is he to be deprived of the pleasure of listening, because nature or circumstance has denied him the full joy of expression? Is a man to be punished for his misfortune?

An inappreciative audience or an incompetent critic may sting a great musician to say, with Schumann, "The most difficult thing to endure is the applause of fools." But musicians, in practical life, need an audience almost as much as (some would say more than) the audience needs the musician. And if we put up too high the bars for admission to the sacred circle of listeners, where will musicians find their audiences? Perhaps here, as in most occasions of life, there is a compromise. What the musician condemns is, surely, not so much the "mere" listener, that is to say the non-performer among his



THE MUSIC LESSON. BY TITIAN

audience, as the unintelligent listener. Except, perhaps, while smarting under the sting of some unkind cut from the professional critic, he is generally disposed to agree with D'Israeli that the talent of judgment may exist separately from the power of execution. He will hold with Krehbiel that the capacity *properly* to listen to music is better proof of musical talent in the listener than skill to play upon an instrument or ability to sing acceptably, when unaccompanied by that capacity. He will, perhaps, lay special emphasis on the word *properly* in Krehbiel's dictum. And he may insist that those who, by attending concerts, make public profession of their interest in music, should be willing to take some little pains along with their pleasure; should devote some serious thought, some study at least to the

rudiments of the art of music, if circumstances prevent their submitting to that rigorous discipline in which "the difficulties of the art draw forth the whole energies of the soul."

In the case of concert-goers of mature years the initiative for such education in the appreciation of music must rest largely with the individual himself. Much, however, can be done, and is being done, by the management and the directors of musical societies, through the issue of analytical programs or by the conductor's verbal exposition of the salient features of the compositions rendered. Invaluable opportunities for the "serious listeners" are also offered by various institutions in the form of expository lectures immediately preceding the performances of our great orchestras. Through the munificence of the late Augustus



THE CONCERT. BY F. SANTACROIX

D. Juillard the material resources available in this country for the advancement of musical art have at one leap been recently much enlarged. We may confidently expect that the advantage thus gained will bring direct benefit not only to those whose special talents draw them into an active musical career, but also to the lover of music who must be content to remain a "mere listener." And this not only by the multiplication of concerts or the additional invitations extended to the world's great artists to play to us, but by the stimulus given to general interest in music, a stimulus that should induce more listeners to become also, in some measure, students of the art of listening to music.

As for the young, modern conditions place at our disposal unparalleled opportunities for awakening in them such understanding and interest in music as the artist must surely welcome in his audience. To the possibilities in this direction Agnes M. Fryberger's little book "Listening Lessons in Music," should open the eyes of music teachers in our schools. Some study of musical

forms, some knowledge of the character and potentialities of the different instruments, these, cultivated by the members of the audience, will secure for the composer and musical exponent greater and more intelligent appreciation. To the listener new pleasures are opened up when he has learnt to listen with schooled attention to the music of concert hall and opera house. There is other music. To it also we must learn to listen; as Emerson tells us that man must learn to watch for "that gleam of light which flashes across his mind from within." It is this choir within that has sung to the poet

"Who, through long days of labor
And nights devoid of ease
Still heard in his soul the music
Of wonderful melodies"

and to whom in turn the poet speaks

"Ye voices that arose
After the evening close
And whispered to my weary heart repose,
Go breathe into the ear
Of all who doubt and fear
And say to them: Be of good cheer!"

Of this inner music, sensed directly by the soul, though unheard by the

bodily ear, the verse of the poet and the score of the musician alike is the expression in physical terms. And, as the vehicle is something less than the thing conveyed, Keats is moved to sing

"Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on
Not to the sensual ear, but more endeared
Pipe to the spirit ditties without tone."

Listen, learn to listen to the voice within. For, there is a music none

but you can hear. Its rhythm is the throb of life; its instrument your heart, upon whose vibrant strings spring breezes, torrid summer blast, wild autumn gale, chill winter wind, in turn, play the song of the seasons. Now tender thought, now melancholy plaint, now strident discord, passion's storm, the trembling strings proclaim. And at the last a pain, a sigh, a tear; a sad farewell, forgetfulness, and rest.



A Wayside Pool

BY FRANCES DICKENSON PINDER

A shallow goblet that the Rain
Left in her flight across the grass . . .
The sun has brimmed it with pale gold
For all the vagabonds that pass.

A bird dips to it in its flight,
The small clouds hover for a share,
While all day long above it bend
The hot wings of the thirsty air.

At last the gypsy Dusk kneels there
And drains it of its last bright gleam—
But Night will tilt the flagon moon
And fill it with a silver dream!